

Can Home Working Save The Planet?

A new report for the Smith Institute and the Live Work Network shows how remote working - and home working in general - can cut carbon emissions.



How homes can become workspace in a low carbon economy includes in-depth comparison of carbon emissions by home workers and office workers, new statistics from Strathclyde University on home based businesses, ideas for low carbon live/work developments and ways employers can benefit from a shift to home working.

Responding to its publication, Paula Wynne, co-founder and Director of Remote Employment, an online home working network said: "This report shows that there are more efficient, productive, and greener ways of working. Small businesses should be more proactive in tackling climate change and reduce costs through reducing their energy consumption. Home working is one way to achieve this."

Remote Employment is dedicated to flexible jobs working from home, work from home jobs, and home based business and home based franchise opportunities and they are extremely proud of their recent BT Global Action Plan 'Responsible Business Day' Award.

From a national search, Remote Employment impressed judges with their passion and determination to understand and reduce their current impact on both the environment and society.

Remote Employment agree with Live Work Network that the case for home working goes beyond the proven environmental benefits. There are also other tangible advantages to both employees and employers from working at home. With commutes becoming ever longer and more unpleasant, home working offers the opportunity for a much less stressful working experience and a better work-life balance.

Individuals can work more flexibly, while cutting out the need to commute regularly gives people more free time. The authors of this

new report also provide evidence that there are real savings for businesses by reducing the need for valuable office space, as well as higher levels of workforce satisfaction, improved staff retention and reduced absenteeism.

The trend is towards more home working and greater flexibility, with new technologies allowing individuals to connect their homes to the global marketplace. These changes are transforming society and present new challenges to the way we live and work. The report's collection of essays examines these challenges up close, and concludes that there are lasting individual and collective benefits by moving to a more environmentally friendly home working economy.

Flexible working, which includes an ability to work from home flexibly and to structure hours more around the needs of family life, should not be confused with making a substantial reduction to our carbon footprints as workers. This is because most home working employees are only temporarily away from their 'main workspace' - a building that remains fuelled day and night (and had to be constructed in the first place).

The carbon benefits of employees' occasionally home working are likely to be relatively small. If however, employers use the potential of home working to reduce or remove their office or workspace infrastructure, as some employers like BT are increasingly doing, then significant benefits can flow.

Contributors to the 115 page report include Treasury adviser Kate Barker, Places for People Group chief executive David Cowans, World Wildlife Fund policy adviser Denis Pamlin, BT head of policy Caroline Waters and CABA chief executive Richard Simmons.

Acknowledged carbon expert,

Professor Peter James, reveals key data on the net carbon benefits of home working compared to ordinary office working. The report includes a comparison of carbon emissions by home workers and office workers as well as ways in which employers can benefit from a shift to home working.

Tim Dwelly said: "This brings home the critical importance of live/work and home-based business to the future low carbon economy. We simply cannot go on assuming that commuting between separate homes and workspaces will remain the norm. We are no longer in the industrial era. With over 40% of all UK businesses now home-based and numbers likely to rise in the downturn, it is time for policymakers to urgently review their approach to employment and business and recognise the potential contribution of the live/work part of the UK economy."

How homes can become workspace in a low carbon economy is edited by Tim Dwelly and Andy Lake of the Live Work Network and includes the thoughts of leading world experts (including World Wildlife Fund policy adviser Denis Pamlin and BT head of policy Caroline Waters) on the environmental impact of the shift to home working and live/work property.

Live Work Network is a membership organisation for everyone with an interest in providing live/work units - properties that combine workplace and home. As well as running this resourceful website, they also hold seminars, keep members in touch with email newsletters, and offer fast track referrals, linking members with others they can learn from and share knowledge.

For more information www.smith-institute.org.uk and www.remoteemployment.com

